

ANT XXIII/5 Weekly Report No. 7 (Punta Arenas - Cape Town)
22 May - 28 May 2006

This week has passed by very fast. Although the types of experiments change all is now routine work. At the beginning of the week several seamounts along the Walvis Ridge were dredged very successfully. The amount of rock is so great that the petrologists are urgently seeking wooden boxes to store the sample material. On May 24th the geophysists started once again to recover their ocean bottom seismometers, which had been recording seismic signals for nearly 12 days. Despite some minor problems all instruments finally showed up.

As mentioned in a previous report some ocean bottom seismometers were deployed close to a seamount, which might have been active about 5 years ago. A quick look at the new data from the bottom stations shows some signals suggesting that volcanic eruptions happened during the time of deployment. Since several instruments show similar signals, but delayed, there is some likelihood that we have monitored a submarine eruption. Other signals are difficult to interpret. However, a detailed analysis, including location of the signal's source area, is needed over the next few years to confirm our observation.

After retrieving the ocean bottom seismometers we steamed towards the seamount to look for further evidence of recent volcanic activity. The result was negative. Neither the swath bathymetry nor the sampling of the seamount provides any evidence for fresh volcanism in the area investigated.

Finally, we began heading south. During May 27th /28th we are stopping our transit for two more dredges. Today, Sunday, we are definitely leaving this research area. After 4 days of transit we will arrive in our last research area almost at the latitude of Cape Town where we will conduct our last experiments.

Several times during the last few nights seabirds landed on deck, attracted and confused by the ship's strong lights. The biologists and the crew offered them overnight accommodation in cardboard boxes until sunrise, when the birds were again set free. Large squid, also attracted by the strong lights, ascend to the sea surface at night and circle around the ship during station work.

The weather has been very pleasant during the past week with an average daytime temperature of about 20°C. So Father's day was celebrated in summer clothes. While heading east, we will face increasingly bad weather conditions. Our meteorologist has already put a storm on his prediction list for our arrival at the Cape Rise seamounts.

With kind regards on behalf of all cruise participants,

Wilfried Jokat

28. May 2006

Position 37°30'S 002°25'W, +17°C